THE
CATHOLIC RADICAL

"...to foster a society based on creed instead of greed." Peter Maurin

December/January 2013-14 ***Price: For whatever it's worth.***

The Reality of Drones

Editor's Note: The following are excerpts from October 2013 reports by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch on US drone attacks in Pakistan and Yemen.

Amnesty International

"I wasn't scared of drones before, but now when they fly overhead, I wonder, will I be next?"

Nabeela, eight-year-old granddaughter of US drone strike victim Mamana Bibi

On a sunny afternoon in October 2012, 68-year-old Mamana Bibi was killed in a drone strike that appears to have been aimed directly at her. Her grandchildren recounted in painful detail to Amnesty International the moment when Mamana Bibi, who was gathering vegetables in the family fields in Ghundi Kala village, northwest Pakistan, was blasted into pieces before their eyes. Nearly a year later, Mamana Bibi's family has yet to receive any acknowledgment that it was the US that killed her, let alone justice or compensation for her death.

Earlier, on 6 July 2012, 18 male laborers, including at least one boy, were killed in a series of US drone strikes in the remote village of Zowi Sidgi. Missiles first struck a tent in which some men had gathered for an evening meal after a hard day's work, and then struck those who came to help the injured from the first strike. Witnesses described a macabre scene of body parts and blood, panic and terror, as US drones continued to hover overhead.

The use of pilotless aircraft, commonly referred to as drones, for surveillance and so-called targeted killings by the USA has fast become one of the most controversial human rights issues in the world. In no place is this more apparent than in Pakistan.

The USA, which refuses to release detailed information about individual strikes, claims that its drone operations are based on reliable intelligence, are extremely accurate, and that the vast majority of people killed in such strikes are members of armed groups such as the Taliban and al-Qa'ida.

Nabeela

Critics claim that drone strikes are much less discriminating, have resulted in hundreds of civilian deaths, some of which may amount to extra judicial executions or war crimes.... According to non-governmental organizations and Pakistan government sources the USA has launched some 330 to 374 drone strikes in Pakistan between 2004 and September 2013. ...between 400 and 900 civilians have been killed in these attacks and at least 600 people seriously injured....

....Whether or not the individuals or groups targeted are considered enemies of the USA, or have carried out or planned crimes against US nationals or others, their deliberate killing by drones outside an armed conflict would therefore very likely violate the prohibition of arbitrary deprivation of life and may constitute extra judicial executions.

...The long-suffering people of North Waziristan and the rest of the Tribal Areas

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Overkill

by Scott Schaeffer-Duffy

On May 2, 2011, 79 US commandos and a dog attacked the Pakistani compound of Osama bin Laden, wounding two people and killing five, including bin Laden. Only one of those killed was armed. No US soldiers were injured. No explanation was given as to why bin Laden was not taken alive and tried as the US government had long promised.

On April 16, 2013, the day after the Marathon bombing, downtown Boston was inundated with military vehicles and police officers decked out like soldiers in combat. Two days later, police pursued bombing suspects Tamerlan and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev. A gun battle ensued, during which the elder Tsarnaev was killed and Boston Common Transit Officer Richard Donahue was seriously wounded. At the time, it was presumed Donahue had been shot by one of the suspects, but, after seven months without a ballistics report, it has become more likely that he was shot by one or more police officers.

When the younger Tsarnaev escaped capture, Boston and four surrounding cities were put under a kind of martial law. Citizens were ordered to stay in their homes, public transportation was discontinued, and searches without warrants were conducted in a vain attempt to apprehend him. He was discovered, not by police but by a resident who found the wounded Tsarnaev hiding in his back yard. Police fired more than 300 times at the suspect before taking him. They initially told reporters that there had been in a gun battle with Tsarnaev, but, after it was revealed that he was unarmed, police never explained why they had used so much firepower.

On May 22, 2013, during a voluntary

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Overkill

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interview in his Florida home, Ibragim Todashev, a suspected accomplice of the Tsarnaev's in earlier murders, was shot to death by an FBI agent. Initial reports claiming that, after eight hours of questioning, Todashev "lunged at an agent with a knife" were later amended to say that Todashev had reached for a gun or sword, and then revised to say that he tried to pick up a broomstick. No explanation was given as to why a pair of FBI agents and two Massachusetts State Troopers present could not subdue the 27-year-old suspect without killing him. An autopsy arranged by Todashev's family indicated that he was shot multiple times, including once in the back of the head. His parents accused the FBI of murdering their son. As of this writing, neither the FBI nor the Massachusetts State Police have issued a public report on the killing.

On September 14, in Charlotte, North Carolina, Jonathan Ferrell, a 24-year-old black man, was in a late-night car accident and sought help at the closest house. A frightened woman called the police. An officer shot Ferrell to death after a Taser failed to stop him from approaching.

And then, on October 3, after crashing into a barrier at the White House, leading police on a chase to the US Capitol, where she struck other barriers, 34-year old Miriam Carey was surrounded by police. When the unarmed mother, whose one-year-old daughter was in the car, tried to flee on foot, police fired six shots and killed her. CNN reported. "Authorities lauded the action of police."

In four of these situations, individuals suspected of crimes were killed instead of being held for trial. Dzhokhar Tsarnaev was not killed, although not from lack of trying. He sustained three gunshot wounds, two to the neck and head. When taken into custody, he was questioned without being informed of his right to an attorney. In all five cases, the American

legal principle "innocent until proven guilty" was superseded by the battlefield dictum "shoot to kill." More alarming is the fact that, after military-style police put more than a million Massachusetts residents under house arrest, the media and public identified the police as heroic public servants rather than trigger-happy violators of the US Constitution.

We should know better. In many foreign countries (most recently Egypt), in times of political and economic turmoil, the populace turns to the military as its savior. With naiveté bordering on absurd, the people hope that the military will respect human rights and lead their nation to democracy. It never works out that way. The kangaroo courts being held for members of the Islamic Brotherhood are to justice as ginger ale is to champagne. Giving up the painstaking process of a legal system that respects the rights of suspects appeals to the mob which already "knows" who's guilty, but such short cuts ultimately leave everyone vulnerable to arbitrary arrest or worse.

On November 5, *The Boston Globe* reported that Mayor Menino had approved arming 22 uniformed officers on every shift with a military M4 semi-automatic rifle and a shotgun. Higher-powered guns that fire many rounds per minute will ensure that more suspects are killed. The distinction between the police and the military is blurring.

When I was a kid, I always marveled at how the British bobbies on the beat did not carry guns. They managed to apprehend many criminals and killed few if any with their nightsticks. The fact that more criminals nowadays are carrying semi-automatic weapons argues for gun control, not an arms race.

Those of us who celebrate the birth of the Prince of Peace should reject killing anyone, including criminal suspects. My wife, Claire, teaches conflict resolutions to middle-schoolers on behalf of Worcester's Center for Nonviolent Solutions. The public schools are begging for programs like this to help teach students how to comport themselves peacefully. Standards are set so high that an 8-year-old boy in Arizona was threatened with explulsion for drawing cartoons of Halloween costumes of Ninja Turtles with swords and guns. How can we promote such zero tolerance for violence in our schools while tolerating the militarization of our police forces? Kids are not blind. They see the hypocrisy. Unless adults show that violence can be met with nonviolence, kids will never take it seriously and the future will be worse.

We cannot proclaim "Peace on earth" on December 25th, and then tolerate executions by the police or the military. We must not allow politicians to get away with casting nonviolence as sentimental. Jesus was not two days old before King Herod massacred all the children in Bethlehem in a vain attempt to kill Him. Jesus knew the world was violent and still insisted on a peaceful response. We should do so as well. Ω

What Makes for Peace?

by Robert Peters

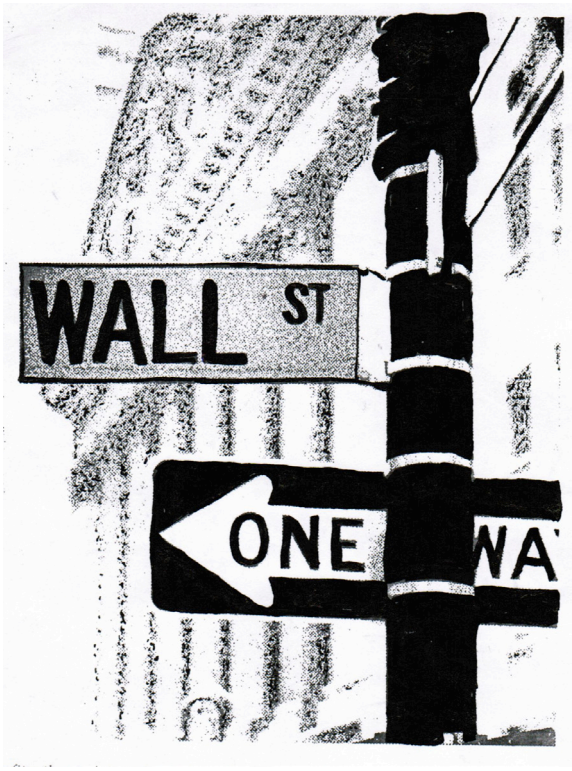
The teaching of Christ is like a many faceted jewel. Turn it over again and again, in this light or that, and it never ceases to fascinate as it reflects back a different beauty each time. Repeated study continues to draw out from within us new insights and responses. Like some crystal ball a seer gazes into, but with higher resolution, it mysteriously reveals things that had hitherto been unknown and unrealized. This is the numinous quality of the Gospel, the mystery behind the good news Jesus proclaimed. It is the mystery of what makes for peace.

When Jesus rode into Jerusalem seated on a young donkey, the crowd of disciples hailed him as the long expected king who would finally bring the peace and glory of heaven down to earth. The conservative religious right of his day, the Pharisees, demanded that Jesus rebuke his disciples and shut them up. Should He do so, He said, the very stones they walked upon would begin to shout out the same truth. He then rebukes them in return saying, "**If this day you only knew what makes for peace – but now it is hidden from your eyes**." Lk.19:42

What was hidden from my own eyes, after so many years of reflection, was just that — what makes for peace? As I turned the jewel, this way and that, as I gazed into the mystery, in its wonder, I began to see. What I saw was a pattern of light, refracted in so many different ways, but always the same source surrounding the numerous passages of scripture. As I read before and after Jesus' rebuke it struck me that virtually every Gospel story has something to do with money, or selling and buying, or offerings, or usury, or taxation, or with possessions, or the lack of possessions, or circumstances leading to beggary, or the failure to use resources justly and effectively, or the failure to share from one's abundance, or the love of those resources above human values and human dignity.

Read it yourself, turn the jewel this way and that, see if you don't see the same thing I see. Peer into this incredible crystal ball and see the history of human suffering, of poverty, of crime, of war. Do you see what I see, the refracted rays of green, gold, and silver? So beautiful! So enticing! So damn deadly! Jesus' message of peace is so very clear now to me. What makes for peace is *what we make of money*.

My dearest friend, long missed, greatly admired and loved, once said to me as I fretted about some financial matter, "Robert, it's just a game of wood and stone, a numbers game." There are so many losers in this game, so many who have lost it, or never got a chance to play, or were never told the rules. I for one refuse to keep playing by the same rules. I like the way Jesus played the game. He rewrote the rules! That's really good news! That's great news! I am so happy to be part of a Christian movement, Catholic Worker, which answers the question "What makes for peace?" with the question "What do you make of money?"



It has been estimated that nearly 90% of the population in Israel during the time of Jesus lived on a subsistence economy. A minority, less than 10%, ruled the economy. The majority were peasants who were small landowners, tenants, wage laborers, tradesmen, and slaves. Most Jewish slaves in Israel were debt slaves, indentured servants. The 10% consisted of imperial elites, their bureaucrats, absentee landlords, rent collectors (otherwise called "stewards"), and tax collectors. Jewish slaves, unlike Gentile slaves, had a theoretical way out called Jubilee. Theoretical, because it wasn't practiced! In the Mosaic Code, God had commanded that Jewish prisoners of debt be released, all debts forgiven, ancestral landownership returned, and every seven years from one Jubilee to another the farm land was to lie fallow. Only allowing the land to lie fallow was kept in practice with great reservations due to the economic hardship it would entail. The rabbinic lawyers found "legal" ways for slave owners to maintain their slaves, as well as to insure the full repayment of debts.

Jesus lived in a period of great economic distress. This was due in great measure to landowners increasing their property holdings through forfeiture due to debt. This concentration of properties in Palestine into the hands of a few was actually the practice throughout the Roman Empire among royalty and aristocrats. Needless to say, the economic situation of the majority was precarious.

Into this picture arrives Jesus! In both Matthew and Luke, Jesus is reported to have been tempted by the devil to use his status as Messiah to exploit wealth and power. Defeating Satan, Jesus then began to preach the coming of God's Kingdom, at least according to Matthew. For Luke however, Jesus' first message in his own hometown was the proclamation of "Jubilee"! Not only was He run out of town, His audience tried to throw Him off a cliff! I suspect the message about the Kingdom and Jubilee were connected in the mind of Jesus.

These facts opened up the Gospels for

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Drones

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deserve to enjoy the same human rights as everyone else, not least the right to life – the foundation for all human rights. By hiding behind arguments of secrecy and exploiting the difficulty in confirming details of specific strikes due to the lawlessness, remoteness, and insecurity of Pakistan's Tribal Areas, the USA is contributing to the litany of violations and abuses endured by a population that has been both neglected and assaulted by their own state and victimized by al-Qa'ida, the Taliban, and other armed groups. The ultimate tragedy is that the drone aircraft the USA deploys over Pakistan now instill the same kind of fear in the people of the Tribal Areas that was once associated only with al- Qai'da and the Taliban....

Human Rights Watch

The evening of August 29, 2012, five men gathered in a grove of date palms behind the local mosque in Khashamir, a village in southeast Yemen. Moments later, US remotely piloted aircraft, commonly known as drones, launched three Hellfire missiles at the group.

The strike killed four of the men instantly, hurling their body parts across the grounds. The blast of a fourth missile hit the fifth man as he crawled away, pinning him lifeless to a wall.

Yemen's Defense Ministry described three of the men as members of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), the Yemen-based armed group that has been fighting the Yemeni government, and which the United States calls the most active affiliate of Al-Qaeda. The men were killed, it said, while "meeting their fellows."

But the two "fellows" they were meeting had no known links to AQAP. Rather, they were respected members of their community. Salim bin Ali Jaber, a cleric and father of seven, had long preached against AQAP's violent methods. The other was the cleric's cousin Walid bin Ali Jaber, one of the village's few police officers. Relatives said the three alleged AQAP members demanded a meeting with the cleric because the previous Friday he had made a particularly strong denunciation of AQAP at the local mosque. Walid Jaber had joined the meeting as a security measure.

The strike in Khashamir is one of six unacknowledged US military attacks against alleged AQAP members in Yemen that this report examines. Each of the airstrikes bears the hallmarks of a so-called targeted killing, the deliberate killing by a government of a known individual under color of law.

2013 Foundation for Fundamental Rights protest in Pakistan

Two of these attacks were in clear violation of international humanitarian law—the laws of war—because they struck only civilians or used indiscriminate weapons. The other four cases may have violated the laws of war because the individual attacked was not a lawful military target or the attack caused disproportionate civilian harm, determinations that require further investigation. In several of these cases, the US also did not take all feasible precautions to minimize harm to civilians, as the laws of war require.

On September 2, 2012, a Toyota Land Cruiser carrying 14 people was attacked by a warplane or drone near the provincial city of Radaa in central Yemen. The strike by a missile or a bomb killed 12 passengers, including three children and a pregnant woman. A thirteenth passenger and the driver were severely burned but survived.

The day of the September 2012 attack, residents heard drones overhead and farmers working in their fields noticed two drones loitering over Radaa and outlying villages. Shortly before 4 p.m., witnesses said, two warplanes also swooped into the area.

"I heard a very loud noise, like thunder," said Sami al-Ezzi, a farmer who was working in his fields in the village of Sabool, about 16 kilometers from Radaa and 2 kilometers from the attack site. "I looked up and saw two warplanes. One was firing missiles."

Rushing to the scene, in the hamlet of Sarar about 7 kilometers north of Radaa, residents found a horrific sight: the battered Toyota Land Cruiser that had served as the daily shuttle service between Sabool and Radaa lay on its side in flames. Charred bodies had been flung from the vehicle and lay on the road, dusted with flour and sugar that the victims were bringing home from market. Everyone killed was a resident of Sabool or the neighboring hamlet of Humaydah.

"About four people were without heads. Many lost their hands and legs," said Nawaf Massoud Awadh, a sheikh from Sabool. "These were our relatives and friends."

Two victims were a woman and girl, clutched in a lifeless embrace. "The bodies were charred like coal. I could not recognize the faces," said Ahmad al-Sabooli, a 23-year-old farmer. Moving in closer, al-Sabooli realized that the woman and girl were his mother and 10-year-old sister. He also saw his father among the dead. "That is when I put my head in my hands and I cried," he said.

Videos provided to Human Rights Watch depicted chaos at the scene "Push! Push!" "Open the door!" residents are heard shouting in one video. Seeking to extinguish the flames, they urge, "Bring sand!"

Al-Sabooli's mother had gone to Radaa with her husband for a doctor's appointment; they had brought their daughter along for the ride. Most of the other passengers were farmers who went to Radaa to sell their crops. They included Mabruk al-Dobari, 14, who sold qat to support his family because his father was disabled. Rescuers found Mabruk's body

torn apart.

"We are just qat farmers," the driver of the vehicle, Nasser Makhut, said in a video clip from a local clinic where he was taken immediately after the strike. Makhut's skin was black from the heat of the strike and he was clearly disoriented. Asked what happened, he replied, "I think a plane fell on us."

Local and international media quoted unnamed Yemeni government officials as saying the attack's intended target was Abd al-Raouf al-Dahab, an alleged local Al-Qaeda chief whose late brother Tariq had led the January takeover of Radaa. ...But al-Dahab was not inside the vehicle or anywhere in sight. Subsequent drone strikes have also failed to kill al-Dahab.

...It is not evident that the US remains in an armed conflict with either Al-Qaeda or AQAP as defined by international humanitarian law. Since taking office, President Obama has disavowed the notion of a "global war on terror," perhaps out of recognition that an armed conflict paradigm did not accurately reflect each and every situation in which the United States encountered Al-Qaeda or other armed groups. The sporadic and smaller scale of operations against US targets by these groups in the 12 years since the attacks of September 11, 2001, further diminishes the legal relevance of the war model.

In his speech at the National Defense University on May 23, 2013, Obama put forward legal and policy rationales for using force in various ways, yet he never explained why he believed a war paradigm was still applicable in many areas where the United States is using force in its counterterrorism efforts.

It is not apparent that there is "protracted armed violence" between the United States and either Al-Qaeda or AQAP at a sufficient level of intensity to qualify as armed conflict. As Obama noted, "There have been no large-scale attacks on the United States, and our homeland is more secure."

While the deployment of military forces by a state against a non-state armed group is a factor in determining whether an armed conflict exists, the genuine need to use that level of force is crucial; otherwise a state could turn any criminal activity into a "war"— indeed, any criminal into a military target—simply by responding with high levels of force.... Ω

Editor's Note: Five Catholic Worker activists (Bill Frankle-Streit, Linda Le Tendre, Ellen Grady, Carmen Trotta, and Father Bill Pickard) were acquitted on October 24th of disorderly conduct for blocking the entrance to Hancock Air Base, home of the 174th Attack Wing of the Air National Guard, Syracuse, New York. Hancock is a Reaper drone hub whose technicians pilot weaponized drones over Afghanistan.

After the verdict was announced, the D.A. objected, and the judge said to him that he hadn't found "mens rea," Latin for "guilty mind." The five defendants convinced the judge that their intent was to uphold, not break, the law.

Afterwards, defendant Ellen Grady stated, "We pray and will continue to act that the children of Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia, Yemen, and all countries will some day soon be without the terror of drones or any wars!"

On the day of their arrest, the five issued a statement which read in part:

> *We come to Hancock Airfield, home of the National Reaper Drone Maintenance and Training Center, this Ash Wednesday, to remember the victims of our drone strikes and to ask God's forgiveness for the killing of other human beings, most especially children....*
>
> *We remind ourselves that our lives are brief and mysterious, and that "**from dust we were created and to dust we shall return**!" The significance of our brief animation is the degree to which we love one another....*
>
> *Stop the Killing. Ground the Drones. STOP the Wars.*

What Makes for Peace?

(Continued from Page 3)

me. So much of what Jesus said speaks directly to how we relate to money and to private property. It explains why the first apostles and disciples, as well as the early Church, were required to show their allegiance to God's Kingdom and to Jesus as its viceroy, by giving up all possessions, and redistributing them among the poor. Thereafter they were to direct all their earnings to this supreme act of justice, the forgiving of debts and the care of the needy.

I love the Catholic liturgy! I join my daily sacrifices on behalf of the poor with the daily sacrifice of Christ's love. Yet, when we pray the Lord's prayer, I do so prefer the Greek and Latin translation of Matthew which reads not "trespass" but "debt," "**Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors**." In the Torah, the failure to pay a debt was regarded as one class of trespass or sins. For our Lord, it was not only a trespass, but the very heart of Israel's problem – the creation of a large class of debtors, born out of lovelessness and leading the country to political and economic ruin. He even said, "**Sin will happen, but woe to him who causes someone to sin**." If we must continue to use "trespass" in the Lord's Prayer, let us at least remember that by definition it is any "wrongful interference with the possession of property (personal as well as realty), or the action instituted to recover damage." It is all about the money!

Noam Chomsky has said that America is a one party system, the "Business Party", with Democrats and Republicans being factions within it. Greater numbers are awakening to this sober fact. Our religious liberty is secure to the degree that we do not pose a threat to it. Call our debtor economy into question, wrangle against Wall Street, protest and refuse to cooperate – watch out, you may be run out of town and thrown off the fiscal cliff! The only way to peace, is through the pocket book. Follow the money trail, and when you have found the ugliness at the end of the path – renounce it! Ω

Entertaining Angels

Police in Hull say school children in town did the right thing by reporting someone offering them rides, even though the friendly stranger turned out to be a nun.

Sergeant Neil Reilly said students carrying heavy bags were walking to school earlier this week when an elderly woman who was driving by stopped and offered them a ride. He tells *The Patriot Ledger* the students were "spooked" by the offer because they had been warned about talking to strangers.

Assistant schools superintendent Judy Kuehn says the woman who talked to the kids was a nun.

Worcester Telegram & Gazette, November 5, 2013

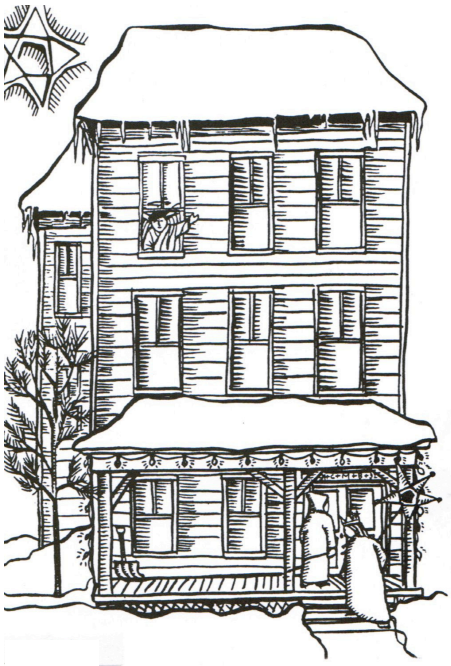
Editor's Note: While there is no doubt that children have to exercise caution in an era when many have been abducted, excessive suspicion and fear of strangers as a child can make it difficult for adults to practice the following mandates of the Hebrew and Christian scriptures:

"**You shall love the stranger, for you were once strangers in the land of Egypt.**"
Deuteronomy 20:19

"**I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me.**"
Matthew 25:35

"**Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.**"
Romans 12:13

"**Let mutual love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.**"
Hebrews 13:1



Rita Corbin

God approaches gently, often secretly, always in love, never through violence and fear. He comes to us, as He Himself has told us, in those whom we know in our own lives. Very often we do not recognize Him

He comes in many people we do not like, in all who need what we can give, in all who have something to give us, and for our great Comfort. He comes in those we love, in our fathers and mothers, our brothers and sisters, our friends and our children.

Because this is so, we must not be content ever to love with *only* natural love. We must also love everyone with a supernatural, sacramental love. We must love Christ in them with Christ's love in us. Ω

The Passion of the Infant Christ
Caryll Houselander

Letters

Dear Claire,

I've just read the latest *Catholic Radical* and liked your article about Judy. I didn't know that you two were college friends and had such a history together. So much greater the loss you feel at her passing. My thoughts and prayers are with you.

I also saw that you quoted Mary Oliver somewhere in the newsletter. I really enjoyed the following poem and thought you might like it.

Today I'm flying low and I'm
not saying a word.
I'm letting all the voodoos of ambition sleep.
The world goes on as it must,
the bees in the garden rumbling a little,
the fish leaping, the gnats getting eaten.
And so forth.
But I'm taking the day off.
Quiet as a feather.
I hardly move though really I'm traveling a terrific distance.
Stillness. One of the doors
into the temple.

Here's wishing you the chance to "take the day off" as Mary Oliver recommends to go into the stillness....

Karen Petrella Vogelsberger
Frankfurt, Germany

Dear Scott, Claire, and members of the Saints Francis & Thérèse Catholic Worker,

...Your outlook on Catholic Worker finances continues to be refreshing — a delicate balance of authentic anxiety and faith-filled trust....

The story of "L" was deeply touching. And the notion that we who strive for voluntary poverty have much Good News to share with the rich resonates deeply.

Chantal de Alcuaz & Josie Beavers
Anchorage, Alaska

Dear Scott and Claire,

...I hope you love the new Holy Father as much as I do. How lucky I've been to see the likes of Pope John XXIII and Pope Francis in my 69 years. Why did it take so long for a pope to take the name Francis? May he live for **many** years.

Good luck with your car search.

Phil Brewer
Rutland, Massachusetts

Dear Scott,

I'm a car guy so I can identify with your car. Today, I got the A.A.A *Horizons* magazine and its "Car Care Month." It says that if a car repair is half the value of the car it is worth doing. *Hemmings* and *Motor Trend* magazines give it a return of 55%. If its replacement is $2,500, that's more than half.

I am retired and don't need to go anywhere important, so I drive a 1993 Volvo with 250,000 miles. Fine with me. The "Check Engine" light has been on since I bought it. A friend at church let me borrow his manual only to find out there's a switch behind the speedometer to turn it off.

I also say to get a small drill and drill into the LED bulb till it's off and put a smiley face sticker over the hole.

Marcel St. Germain
North Smithfield, Rhode Island

Dear Grandparents,

...I loved "Good News for the Rich." It prompted memories. My brother and I, wards of the state, were taken in by cousins in Worcester in 1945. Picked apples with migrants for a very short time, had paper routes, and shoveled snow.

We moved to an empty house on Manning Street in Holden. No heat, no bathroom, outhouse, huge vegetable garden. Washed clothes in the brook, still there, and lugged them up the hill. To get money for clothes, I baby sat and worked in the Princeton Coffee House right across from the antique car museum, which is no longer there. Movies at the Greendale Theatre. Radio programs. I remember discovering Emerson's poems and *On Walden Pond* with joy. (Sneaking *Lady Chatterly's Lover*.) I thought, "When I'm older, people will be good!"

But what did I have that the "poor" do not have today (or the rich)? No Kelly Square, drones, radiation. Tons of wild lilacs and blueberries, fresh air and water to swim in and drink. The pine trees. And a most *magical* thing at night—a whippoorwill (I have never heard since)....

And all this while, Edith Stein [killed in a Nazi concentration camp], Franz Jägerstätter [beheaded for refusing to serve in Hitler's army]. God have mercy on us ignorant and blind.

Turns out I was very rich.

Hope you get a car and every beautiful, true, and good thing.

Johanna Freeman
Worcester, Massachusetts

Editor's Note: Thanks to Johanna and many others, including friends as far away as New Zealand, we paid all our overdue bills and replaced our 192,000-mile Prius with a 32,000-mile model. We also replaced two drafty windows, put an overhead light in our kitchen, removed some asbestos from our basement, and advanced the rewiring of our house. We feel so blessed!

As a side note, due to the theft of the antenna on our old van, we have been listening to casette tapes when we drive it. Years ago, Claire's sister Michele gave us a collection of the 1940's Radio program "Suspense." It features major stars and authors of the day, as well as commercials promoting products like "Roma Wine, made in California for enjoyment throughout the world." Johanna is right that some of the things of bygone eras were pretty special.

Dear Scott,

...I've met a most unusual young man in here who committed a crime when he was a juvenile and was sentenced as an adult. He is twenty-seven now, and doesn't get out until 2022. He is so innocent and kind and mature for his age. We have become good friends. He is from Laos. His family went to a refugee camp in Thailand and, because someone in his family helped the Americans in Vietnam, they were allowed in the United States. His name is **Oui Saythonom (DC# R30209)**. He is using this time to learn and grow. ...He sure is a good example. He gets no mail. He has family support which he budgets very wisely....

Scott, is there anyone you know who would want a unique correspondence with a deserving young man in need of a healthy, learning, and compassionate friendship? I haven't met anyone like this guy in my years in prison.

F. Scott Perkins (DC# 199577)
Zephyrhills Correctional Institution
2739 Gall Blvd.
Zephyrhills, FL 33541-9701

Thank you for the marvelous quotes from the Fathers of the Church. They are not only a source of hope, but a source of renewed energy.

Dorothy Kennedy
Natick, Massachusetts

Great quotes on war and wealth. Seems wealth can be a form of war, especially if it is hoarded and not distributed.

Phil Milgrom
Warren, Massachusetts

Catholic Worker Calendar

Wednesday, December 11 — Advent Prayer: Please join us for Mass or Evening Prayer in the joyful season of preparation for Christmas. 7 P.M. 52 Mason Street. Refreshments to follow

Sunday, December 22 — Christmas Caroling: Please join us as we bring Christmas cheer to a nursing home and our neighbors. We will enjoy mulled cider and Christmas cookies afterwards. Please gather at 5:30 P.M. 52 Mason Street.

Wednesday, January 8 & 22 — Evening Prayer or Mass: Please come pray with us in the New Year. Refreshments to follow. 7 P.M. 52 Mason Street.

Rita Corbin

Mason Street Musings

It was news of pneumonia striking my 88-year-old mother that prompted me to jump into our "new" used Prius – its purchase made possible by donations from you, dear readers – and drive 413 miles south to a hospital in northern Virginia on a late afternoon in early November. The trees along the Massachusetts Turnpike were a ribbon of golden yellow, but by the time I reached Middletown, Connecticut, a cold crescent moon burned sharp and bright in the corner of the car window. Venus, also in view, twinkled resolutely. At the hospital, the machine monitoring my mother's heart scribbled jagged peaks across a dark screen.

"She'll be all right," our neighbor, Reverend Dyer, said when he stopped by to drop off yet another bag of candles, largesse from his friend, a Vietnamese shop-keeper. Reverend Dyer is one of the most peaceable men I know. Everyone is at ease in his presence, most especially, it seems, the Vietnamese shopkeeper who keeps giving him all kinds of donations. Boxes of tennis shoes and now these cheaply made candles from China of curious mold. Our collection includes a miniature baby carriage, hearts, rectangular pillars painted a garish yellow, and an oval-shaped column embossed with a star fish. Reverend Dyer, hale and hearty at 85, has become the distributor of this strange bounty.

I'm glad for the gift. It pleases me to think candles from the Buddhist friend of this Bible-reading, Louisiana preacher are illuminating the homes of congregants from Mount Sinai Church of God in Christ and our Catholic house.

My mother *is* all right, thank God. Her frightening week-end of labored breathing

and erratically escalating pulse prompted frank musings about death and faith. " I'm not afraid of dying," she said. "I just can't imagine heaven. As I child, I thought it was a place where streets were lined with gold, but now I have no idea what heaven looks like."

"Whatever its form, we won't know loss there," I said.

I made the Virginia circuit twice in one week, the long hours in the car flying by as I listened to Professor William McKeen of the University of Florida lecture on the art of literary journalism, and Jesuit Joseph Koterski expound on the ethics of Aristotle. *"Moral virtue" is that state of character in which a person has the habit of choosing the mean between the extremes of excess and deficiency*. I am not sure what the good prof means precisely, but I am striving for it.

I return to a house that is the same and ever-changing. Two October guests are still here, but there is a new face at the supper table, a young, unemployed man from Connecticut who came to Worcester "because of a girl." I often think the poverty we observe is much more than a lack of money. So many who come have not had enough beauty in their lives, not enough lectures on Aristotle by the likes of Father Koterski, and certainly not enough love.

Yesterday, ten of us circled around the upstairs kitchen to celebrate Mass. We listened as Father Donahue spoke of the pope's desire for us to become "a poor church for the poor" and then cupped our hands to receive the great generosity of Christ's poverty. I loved seeing those hands extended expectantly. Soon we will celebrate Advent, then the Incarnation. In the third week of December, we will read the "O" antiphons at evening prayer by the light of Reverend Dyer's strange candles. And for me, that will be a bit of heaven here and now. Blessed Advent. Happy Christmas. **Claire**

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